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Geographic Alliance of Iowa

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Geographic Alliance of Iowa.

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Geography News

Volume 34 Issue 1 – Spring 2010

Coordinator's Corner

-- Kay Weller

As the seasons change so have faces at the GAI. There are new folks here that you will get to know during the next few months.

For starters Dr. Alex Oberle has joined me as Co-coordinator of the GAI. As my years of service continue to advance it is important that the transition upon my retirement be a smooth one. With Alex as a co-coordinator that process will be much easier. I remember how important it was when I came on board that Dr. Austin was here to help me through those first stressful months. Both Dr. Pease Head of the Department of Geography and Dean Mauceri have agreed that Alex will be taking a more active role in the operations of the GAI. He has been active for the GAI by securing the Fulbright-Hays Group Project Abroad to Chile for the summer of 2009. This was a most exciting and interesting experience for all the participants.

Kathy Zeets has joined the GAI as the Administrative Assistant for us. She is primarily responsible for the financial duties associated with the difficult to use book keeping system here at UNI. Without her neither Alex nor I would be able to continue to provide the programming and planning necessary to make this Alliance so robust.

We miss Jane Gillen but know that her full time job in Computer Science is more secure than the grant funded job with the GAI. We wish her well and see her often.

Our programming was very successful during the summer of 2009. In fact, some programs required the addition of extra sessions of the same content and the Railroads: Over and Under required a larger bus be rented for the field trips. It is interesting that while other states are experiencing declining enrollments ours were at an all time high. We hope that trend continues in the future. Please encourage others to attend!!!!

Railroads Under and Over

ALL ABOARD! Our conductors were Don Peterson and Steve Wymore. We traveled the underground and over ground railroad geography the week of August 3-7, 2009.

Our trip began at the Western Historic Trails Center. This center is located at the convergence point of four major trails: Lewis & Clark, Oregon, Mormon, and California trails. What better place to begin our journey

The next day we continued our journey by visiting The Todd House in Tabor, Iowa. Rev. John Todd and the town of Tabor were part of the Underground Railroad. Rev.

Todd gave his weapons, cannons, shells and ammunition to John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry.

Our next stop was at the Mayhew Cabin in Nebraska City. Here we were able to see beneath the cabin in a cave once known as "John Brown's Cave". The log cabin is Nebraska's only recognized Underground Railroad network freedom site.

Our next adventure was at the home of Rev. George Hitchcock in Lewis, Iowa. The slaves traveling through Cass County came through this area. They then continued to Des Moines, Grinnell, Iowa City, and on to Illinois. Here we were able to experience the "secret" room in the basement. We were able to learn the language of the Underground Railroad and see the quilt patterns used by the slaves.

The next day, our journey took us to the General Grenville Dodge house in Council Bluffs, Iowa. General Dodge was known as the "greatest railroad builder of all time". Dodge convinced Abraham Lincoln that beginning the route in Council Bluffs was the best route. Later when Lincoln became president, took Dodge's advice.

We continued our exploration of railroads with a trip to the Rails West RR Center. It was a Rock Island Depot. We were able to walk aboard different railroad engines, a mail car, and dining car to see how mail was delivered and picked up by the train. We also learned about the "FROG". The frog is used to help put a railroad car back onto the tracks.

On Thursday we saw the biggest diesel locomotive as well as the biggest steam locomotive. After this impressive beginning to our day, we were even more impressed by our next stop. We were given special clearance to see the main operating center for the Union Pacific Railroad. We continued our exploration with a visit to the Union Pacific rail repair center. We donned our hard hats and took off to explore different rail cars. This was very impressive.

As an end to our exploration, we went aboard a dinner train. We were able to experience first-hand the difficulty of walking on a moving train and also to have an excellent meal and dining experience. It was a perfect way to end the days of exploration of railroad history.

SS Kropotkin in Russia

Shortly after school dismissed last June, 14 intrepid Iowans converged on the SS Kropotkin in Moscow for a tour of the Volga Waterway connecting Moscow and St. Petersburg, a true trip of a lifetime! The first two days in Moscow sped past as we toured the Kremlin, visited St. Basil's Cathedral, shopped in the former GUM department store and Arbat Street, and explored the city, including the Metro. Each stop was incredible!

On board the Kropotkin every announcement came over the loud speaker 6 times! Among the 242 passengers were Americans, Brits, Canadians, Danes, Germans, Norwegians, Russians, & Turks. The English-speaking passengers studied Russia while en route—its language, its history, its music, and the making of matruskya dolls. Our marvelous tour guides, Galya & Svetlana, made everything fun and interesting! The cooks made an effort to make the food tasty and very decorative—we'll never forget the cornflakes mosaics! We toured the bridge, sampled a champagne & blini tea, and munched a variety of piroshky. Julia's souvenir palace drew us like moths! And every evening the Russian folk dance group entertained all of the night owls.

The ship navigated the innumerable locks of the waterway mostly at night, allowing us to debark each day to explore a new destination: Uglich with its impressive old Cathedrals of Prince Dimitri's Blood and the Transfiguration, Yaroslavl with the wonderful story of Yaroslav's conquest of the bear (and incidentally the neighboring area) & it's beautiful concert in the monastery, Goritzky with its wonderful traditional peasant homes opened to visitors, Kizhy with its incomparable wooden architecture in the Winter & Summer Cathedrals, the farmhouse, the belltower, and the windmill, and Mondragie with its gorgeous crafts being created right in front of us. Each stop unique, each stop incredibly breathtaking! And the shopping, oh, the shopping! Stalls and stalls of treasures! And so many opportunities to practice our "Russian" and ability to pantomime! When we reached St. Petersburg, we toured the Hermitage Art Gallery, drove through several sections of the city, and had lots of optional activities.

Helsinki—beautiful, friendly, interesting and what a place to spend Midsummer's holiday! An easy city to get around, English spoken & understood, Helsinki provided a relaxing transition back to the western world. We explored & shopped on our own during the afternoon. Later we toured the archipelago to watch the many bonfires being lit in celebration of the holiday! The joyful singing conveyed a strong sense of the Finns' pride in their heritage! It was hard to leave the next morning and head home, even though our minds were so crammed with impressions of all we'd seen and done that we didn't think they could hold any more.

Fulbright-Hays Group Project Abroad

In spring 2009, the GAI received word that Dr. Alex Oberle was granted a Fulbright-Hays grant on his proposal to take 12 teachers plus GAI co-coordinator Dr. Kay Weller on a study program to Chile. This is the 4th Fulbright-Hays study program for teachers that have been granted to Iowa since 1999. This project focused on migration in and out of Chile and it's impact on housing and settlements. Eleven teachers from Iowa, and one from Minnesota, traveled together for four weeks to four different areas of Chile.

The program began in Santiago with many field trips to suburbs of the city of six million people were explored to see urban sprawl as well as middle class flight to the suburbs both out and up from the smog of the city. While there, we attended a very special 4th of July gathering at the American

Embassy where snowflakes made a brief appearance. We learned that while the capital is situated here, the president lives in and the congress meets in Valpariso. We also learned that there is much agriculture in the valley to the north and south of Santiago which provides most of the US's winter fruit. The vinyards to the south of Santiago are now world famous for their wines also.

The second city visited was Concepcion. This is Chile's second largest city and a visit to near-by Lote gave good insight to how smaller towns, once dependent on coal mining must now reinvent themselves. We also visited Hualpen, where we visited with teachers and presented information about our hometowns and schools. On a less happy note, this school is located in an area hard hit by the recent earthquake and multitudes of severe aftershocks. Our hearts go out to the dear people that we met there as well as to the people of Lote and Concepcion both of which have much earthquake and tsunami damage to repair.

The third city, a short 12 hour bus trip north was to La Serena. This city is rebuilding itself as a resort destination. We were able to visit the beach across from our hotel in relative solitude compared to the throngs that flock to it in their summer season. It is also very close to Coquimbo where we got a lesson on the piracy of Sir Francis Drake and the English influence on the town. While there we toured the farm regions around the city as well as toured the mining town of Andacolla to see one of the main sources of income, ore and minerals as well as to compare large and very small scale mining.

After a trip of 23 hours, we arrived in the northernmost city in Chile, Arica. Situated in the incredible Atacama Desert we learned that a decisive battle in the War of the Pacific was fought near Arica and resulted in the town which was once a part of Peru being annexed by Chile. A very interesting aspect of Chile that we had not known about were the Afro-Chileanos, descendents of African slaves brought centuries ago to establish agricultural plantations along the Lluta and Azapo Rivers.

As we returned to Santiago on the 30+ hour, marathon bus trip from Arica, we marveled at the length and austerity of the Atacama, the height and grandeur of the Andes, as well as, the diversity of people who live there. In every town, we interviewed local inhabitants and found that like anywhere, most of the young people look to the big cities as places for opportunities and education and yet, respect and appreciate the tranquility and lack of crime found in smaller cities. Chile, like the US, is a blend of races and cultures that give the country a uniqueness that is unlike anywhere else. We also were able to see a country on the rebound from a terrifying dictator and economic stress to become one of the most stable and economically successful countries in South America

The GAI, the leadership of Drs. Oberle and Weller and the generosity of the Fulbright-Hays program resulted in many wonderful memories for 12 Midwestern teachers who translated that experience into a multitude of lesson plans available on the GAI website as well as many photos to share with students throughout the world.

Iowa, Agriculture and Geography in the Iowa Core Curriculum

- Dates:** July 21-24 , 2010
- Features:** Cheryl Mullenbach, Iowa Dept. of Education, Social Studies Director
Pioneer International
Living History Farms
Neil Smith National Wildlife Refuge
ISU Dairy Campus
Soy food Council
Des Moines Farmers Market
- Advantages:** Can commute
Stay at hotel of your choice
Small group – limited to 20
- Benefits:** Offered for 2 hours UNI credit
Can be applied to the Social Science Masters program offer by UNI Continuing Education
Free GPS furnished by the GAI
- Location:** Des Moines area
- Cost:** \$99 covers registration, lunches, and GPS

Iowa, Agriculture and Geography in the Iowa Core Curriculum

Mr. _____ Ms. _____

Name _____

Home Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

E-mail _____

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confirmed when payment has been received.

FAX: 319/273-7103

MAIL: K. Weller
UNI – ITTC 205
CEDAR FALLS, IA- 50614-0406

Email: kathy.zeets@uni.edu

PHONE: 800/601-3899 OR 319/273-5952

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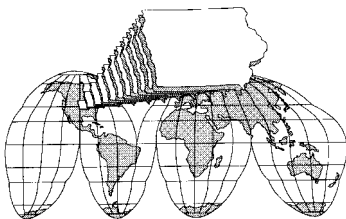
University of Northern Iowa

Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614-0406

319.273.5952

Toll free in Iowa 1.800.601.3899

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GAI Co-Coordinator: Dr. Kay E. Weller

Email: Kay.Weller@uni.edu

Phone: 319-273-7343

GAI Co-Coordinator: Dr. Alex Oberle

Email: Alex.Oberle@uni.edu

Phone: 319-273-6332

GAI website: <http://www.uni.edu/gai>

Phone: 1-800-601-3899 or 319-273-5952